NEWSLETTER - AUGUST 1992

Hello again.
Forgotten, but not gone! Yes folks, I'm still around. I may be in a motorised wheelchair and my voice may be a distant memory, but as my mind is unaffected and I can still use my word processor, I thought that I'd volunteer to type the club newsletters. And as there's plenty of news on the Crosby front still to hand to fill these two pages and more. I'm still collecting and in particular, have added several new videos which I'll be loaning the club to screen at future meetings. Speaking of which, here are the dates for the rest of the year:

TUESDAY AUGUST 25TH - 'BLUE SKIES' + 'GEORGE IN CIVVY STREET'

Interestingly, BLUE SKIES has been quoted as Fred Astaires most financially successful movie. Certainly it's not his most famous film, but as 1946 was one of the five straight years that Bing was #1 at the box office in the USA, then that claim is most probably true. BLUE SKIES gave Irving Berlin a chance to re-cycle some successful old songs and add a few new ones. The Technicolor print has held up well over the years, as has Bing's singing. I've always liked his lazy summer day interpretation of the title song.

As a companion piece, Bernie Mullins is bringing along George Formby's 1943 movie GEORGE IN CIVVY STREET. Well-remembered English comedian Ronald Shiner is also a prominent cast member. It's a shame that George's movies aren't shown on TV at all in this country. Never mind - come along on the 25th and you can see the lad from Lancashire on the big screen.

TUESDAY OCTOBER 13TH - 'IF I HAD MY WAY' + SUPPORTING SHORTS

It's been quite a while since we screened IF I HAD MY WAY so this late 30s feature is making a welcome return. However, I think that you'll also be entertained by our supporting programme.

Do you remember the Phil Silvers TV show from the 1950s? As Sgt Ernie Bilko, he made a great impression at the time. Although the show didn't usually feature guest stars, Bing appeared in one episode. (As Silvers was resident comedian for a while on the Kraft Music Hall in the 1940s, perhaps Bing was doing an old friend a favour.) Well, we recently obtained this show and will be screening it at the meeting. It's still very funny and provides a rare opportunity to see Bing's older brother Everett on screen.

Besides Bilko, we have a rare late 1920s short featuring two songs from Ruth Etting, an early Burns and Allen one-reeler, and a few more surprises.

N.B. In an earlier newsletter the date for the meeting was given as October 31st. Please note that the correct date is October 13th!

TUESDAY DECEMBER 1ST - 'ROAD TO UTOPIA' + THE HOLLYWOOD PALACE - XMAS 1966

Bing and Bob's 'Road' series have held up well over the years and ROAD TO UTOPIA was one of the best. We'll also be screening an early episode of HOLLYWOOD PALACE featuring Bing and his (then) young family.

IF YOU WANT THE VICTORIAN BING CROSBY SOCIETY TO CONTINUE, PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ATTEND THE ABOVE MEETINGS. THE A.M.P. THEATRETTE IS GETTING VERY EXPENSIVE TO HIRE AND THE CLUB NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT TO MAKE IT WORTHWHILE. ALTHOUGH I CAN'T BE THERE IN PERSON, I'LL BE THERE IN SPIRIT.

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* Two commercial video releases featuring rare Crosby material have created some interest in recent months. THE MAGIC OF BING CROSBY, produced in the USA, is available here on the PAL system and features material taken from TV (early 1950s to early 1970s) plus a couple of scarce films clips including one from a 1933 short with Bing singing 'You're Getting To Be a Habit With Me'. The tape also features unnecessary (to me) on-camera comments from Rosemary Clooney, Kathryn Crosby, etc. At around $30 for 55 minutes running time, this is an expensive item, but the producers have obviously spoken with people who know what collectors want, as most of the clips were new to me. Both sound and picture quality are excellent.

The other video also comes from the USA and also contains rare footage, but there are problems with buying it. For a start, you need a machine capable of playing the American NTSC system and on long-play speed. However, at only US$7.95 (that's not a misprint), it's incredible value. Obviously not a 'legitimate' release, BING CROSBY - THE WORLD'S GREATEST ENTERTAINER (Al Jolson who?) features a mix of trailers for Bing's movies, newsreels and TV footage. As it runs over 90 minutes and has been quite well produced, you do wonder how they can do it for the money. Quality is variable and the long play speed doesn't help but at that price, who can complain? Unfortunately, A.M.P. can't run long play NTSC tapes or we would show it.

* New CDs keep being issued all the time, although the different companies re-issuing out-of-copyright material are fast doubling up on titles. One example I received only recently is a beautifully produced double-CD set from the UK called "The Jazzin' Bing Crosby, 1927 -1940)" which features 48 great tracks. The only problem is that virtually all have been issued on more than one CD in the last 2 - 3 years already! Who do the producers think is out there to buy these things? Surely the market is saturated.

Of far greater interest and available locally is a release put together by the people who now own the Decca masters in the USA. Called "Bing Crosby And Some Jazz Friends", it features 20 tracks taken from the original masters including previously unissued takes of 'My Baby Said Yes' and 'After You've Gone'. Many other tracks are making their CD debut too.

Just room to mention "The Most Welcome Groaner' from the UK with 20 tracks of songs from Bing's late 30s movies, most new to CD. Derek Parkes can supply it. Write to: 66 Firs Rd, Firsdown, Salisbury, Wilts SP5 1SW, UK. Lots more records, but no more room! Regards, Bob Machliss.

Bob